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CHARGE

GIVEN TO

Mr. MICAJAH TOWGOOD,

AT HIS

ORDINATION

IN

Moreton Hampstead, DEVON,

August 21. 1722.

Publiſh'd at the Request of the Con-
gregation in that Town.

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 YOU have this Day, in the Presence of GOD, and this great Assembly devoted yourself to the Service of CHRIST JESUS in his Sanctuary. You have been solemnly invested with the Ministerial Office. Your Capacity for the sacred Function hath been try'd by senior Ministers, by such as are competent Judges in that Affair: and you have been set apart by Fasting and Prayer, with the laying on of the Hands of the Presby-

Acts xlii.
2.

tery. Not that you have receiv'd your Commission from us, but from the Prince of Peace, the King of *Sion*. 'Tis the King's Charter that gives the Mayor of a Corporation his Authority to act, tho' the Freemen chuse him, and the Recorder swears him. However, this Business of Ordination is not to be look'd upon as an insignificant and useless Ceremony. It derives its original from the HOLY GHOST, who commanded *Paul* and *Barnabas* to be separated to the Work of the Ministry. And this solemn Rite hath been observed in all the successive Ages of the Church, from the beginning of Christianity, to this very Day. Nor is it more than is absolutely necessary to guard the sacred office against the Attempts of ignorant and rash Intruders. 'Tis not for every over zealous *Uzzab* to thrust forth a hasty hand to the Ark of GOD, tho' tottering and shaking. And King *Uzziab* got nothing but a leprous Forehead when he exchange'd the royal Sceptre for a priestly Censor. 'Twas *Aaron's* Rod alone that blossom'd and bore Almonds; and they have the best Reason to hope that they shall see the Fruit of their endeavours who are call'd to the holy Function as *Aaron* was. That part of this Day's work which is devolved upon me, is to stir up your pure mind by way of remembrance; and to present you with a short Scheme or Abstract of the Work that lies before you, and of the Duties that are incumbent on you. And I hope I can say for myself and my Brethren here present, That we detest the Hypocrisy of the Scribes and

and *Pharisees*, who laid heavy Burdens upon others, which they would not themselves touch with one of their Fingers.

THE Character by which the holy Scriptures describe a Gospel Minister, is that of an *Overseer*; a Title very emphatical, and expressive of his duty. Give me leave therefore to make this the Foundation of my ensuing Discourse unto you. And since all *Overseeing* necessarily presupposes *Seeing*, I shall comprehend what I have to offer under these two Heads.

Acts xx.

28.

I. I SHALL consider what Things are requisite for Sight. And,

II. WHAT you should see or look to.

I. I AM to consider what Things are requisite for Sight. And we shall find that in order to see, there must be 1. A duly qualify'd Organ, or Eye to see with. (2. There must be Light to see by. And (3.) A proper Scituation and due Distance of the Object to be seen.

1. IN order to see, there must be a duly qualify'd Organ, or well-disposed Eye. If there be an Obstruction in the optic Nerves; if the Coats or Humours of the Eye be broken; if any remarkable Disorder be found in those Parts which compose that curious, that wonderful Machine the Eye of Man, there can be no such Thing as Sight. Thus also in spiritual Concerns, an Overseer must be duly qualify'd for the Discharge of that important Trust that is reposed in him. He who
is

1 Tim.
iii. 2.

2 Tit. i.
9.

is blind himself, should not set up for a Guide to others, lest they all fall into the Ditch. A Gospel Minister must be one *that is apt to teach*; fitted and capacitated for the Instruction of others. He should be *able to exhort, and convince Gainsayers*. He must not be a Novice, one newly planted in CHRIST'S Vineyard, as the Greek Word properly signifies; not thoroughly fix'd and establish'd in the Doctrines of the Gospel. He should not be a partial near-sighted, over-valuer of himself, or Despiser of others: Nor should his intellectual Eye be darken'd by the Fumes and Vapours of sensual Lusts. In order to be duly qualify'd for the sacred Office, a competent Portion of human Learning, if it be not absolutely necessary, is yet highly expedient and very useful. We should spend some Time at the Feet of Gamaliel, before we sit down in the Chair of St. Paul. The Apostles, 'Tis true, when first chosen by our SAVIOUR, were most of them a Company of mean, illiterate Mechanicks: They were not Philosophers of Athens; but Fisher-men of Galilee. To trim their Boats, and mend their Nets; to bait their Hooks, and manage their Sails and Oars, were perhaps all the Arts and Sciences that they were Masters of: But then they experienced a miraculous Effusion of the HOLY SPIRIT, and were in an extraordinary manner assisted by Him. And this was more than sufficient to supply the Defects of their Education. And when we see others produce the same Credentials the Apostles did; healing the Sick, and curing the

the most inveterate Distempers by a Word; when we hear them speak those Languages they never learned, we may then be persuaded to disband our Academies, and shut up our Schools of Literature. But as the Case now stands, and is like to continue, we can't expect to see any Plants of Renown in our LORD's Vineyard, except such as are taken out of these Nurseries. 'Tis not for every common Reaper to thrust his Sickle into the LORD's Harvest. Nor should every ordinary Shepherd conceit himself to be duly qualify'd for the Oversight of CHRIST's Flock. The Church, indeed, is call'd GOD's Building; but it by no means follows, that any Carpenter or Mason is fit to be employ'd in that Service; or that every Block can make a Pillar for the Tabernacle. We have, Thanks be to GOD, our BIBLES in the *English* Tongue; By them the *unlearned* Reader may be instructed in all that is *absolutely necessary* to be believ'd or practic'd by him; and so made wise unto Salvation. But should a Minister remain an utter Stranger to the Original Languages, how will he be able to manage against a subtle Jesuit, or sly Deceiver? Such an one as this, instead of confuting an Heretick, will be himself confounded by him; and have his own Mouth stopp'd instead of that of a Gainsayer. And as far as my Advice may be thought worthy of your Regard, I would recommend to you the Study of Church-History, and an acquaintance with Ecclesiastical Antiquity. Our Adversaries, on all Sides, pretend to draw great Advantages from thence, and

and I think it a Piece of commendable Prudence in us to know the Length of an Enemy's Sword, and to be able to deal with him at his own Weapon.

2. A second Thing requir'd in order to Sight, is Light to see by; without this the sharpest and most penetrating Eye would be useless and insignificant. This enables us to distinguish one Object from another. Without this we should not know where to go, or what to do; but should be in Danger of tumbling over Rocks and Precipices to our utter Ruin. Now the Light by which a spiritual Overseer is to guide himself and others, is, the Word of GOD. *Thy Word is a Lamp unto my Feet, and a Light to my Path,* says the Psalmist. By this you may distinguish Truth from Error, and Virtue from Vice. No Doctrine should be embraced by you, or recommended unto others, before it has been weighed in the Balance of the Sanctuary. This is the Compass by which you are to steer your Course in the midst of a tempestuous, stormy World: Neglect this Rule, you will be like Children toss'd to and fro by every Wind of Doctrine, and in the End make Shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience. GOD's Word is your Light, but you should also beg the Illumination of his SPIRIT. And if you have him for your Guide, you will not mistake the Way that leads to Happiness and Glory.

3. ANOTHER Thing necessary for Sight is the due Scituation and proper Distance of the Object. That the Object may be distinctly view'd and seen, it must be plac'd

Placed neither too near the Eye, nor at too great a Distance from it. The same Rule should be observed by such as are Overseers in Christ's Church. A Minister may be guilty of a very great Fault in this Respect, either thro' Pride on the one Hand, or Cowardise on the other. Thro' Pride, when he keeps himself at an affected Distance from his Inferiors, when he is too great and haughty to be approach'd, or conversed with by the Poor of his Flock : When he is so conversant in the Parlours and Dining-rooms of the Rich, that he disdains to put his Feet over the Threshold of a mean and smoaky Cottage. Or he may be guilty thro' Cowardise, when he dares not come close enough to a great Offender, and tell him of his Faults. When he is afraid to disgust a Patron, to disoblige a Benefactor, or deliver an ungrateful Message to one on whom he has some secular Dependence.

ON the other Hand, a faithful Minister should acquaint himself as much as possible, with the Condition of his People. No wise Physician will pretend to prescribe a Medicine, before he knows something of the Temper and Constitution of his Patient. The Symptoms and Effects of the Disease he labours under. No wise Counsellor will be positive in his Opinion, before he is acquainted with the State and Circumstances of the Case that lies before him. 'Tis a great Mistake to suppose that a Minister's Work lies wholly in the Pulpit. The famous Doctor of the *Gentiles*, St. Paul, had other Apprehensions of the

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Matter,

Acts xx. 20. Matter, when he told the *Ephesian Elders*, That he had *taught them publickly, and from House to House*, I make no question, but you will readily acknowledge that such an illustrious Example deserves your Regard and Imitation.

As the Object to be seen must not be placed at too great a Distance, so neither must it brought too near: Relation, Friendship, Interest, nor any other Consideration should hinder you from taking Notice of those Faults in one of your People, which perhaps are visible and conspicuous to all the World beside.

II. HAVING consider'd what Things are requisite to Sight: I am next to enquire, What it is you should see or look to. And here you should see (1.) to your Self. (2.) To your People. (3.) To your Management, as it relates to your Brethren in the Ministry.

1 Tim. iv. 16. I. LOOK to yourself in these Instances. See to your Doctrine: *Take heed to thyself and to thy Doctrine*, says St. Paul to his Son Timothy. Let the revealed Will of GOD be the Foundation on which 'tis built. An Ambassador, when employ'd by an earthly Potentate, must follow the Instructions that are given him, with the greatest Punctuality and Exactness: He forfeits his Head if he exceeds the Limits of his Commission; or concludes a League for which he is not sufficiently authoriz'd. Your Office is that of an Ambassador, you are sent forth by the Prince of Peace to transact with sinful and apostate Men, an Affair of the greatest

greatest Importance. Peace and Reconciliation must be offer'd to 'em upon no other Terms than such as are contain'd in the great Charter of Christianity, your BIBLE. You are not allow'd to Coin new Sins, new Doctrines, or new Duties. Nor should you suffer any of those counterfeit Pieces to pass thro' your Hands, which have not *Cæsar's* Image and Superscription stamp'd upon them. Christianity never suffer'd more than when the Subtleties of *Scotus* and *Aquinas* were study'd more than the Writings of the Apostles; and when the Simplicity of the Gospel was confounded by the Disputes and Sophistry of the Schools. Then it was that Idolatry and Superstition broke in like a mighty Torrent upon this *Western* World, and carry'd all before 'em. This pav'd a Way for Papal Tyranny and Grandeur to raise itself upon the Ruins of Truth, Charity, and Devotion. 'Tis to the Law therefore and Testimony that you, upon all Occasions, should have Recourse.

2. As you should see to your Doctrine, so also to your Life and Conversation. In vain is wholsom Doctrine sounding in your Peoples Ears, if a dissolute and lewd Example be at the same Time set before their Eyes. We can't with any tolerable Grace declaim against those Vices in others which are practis'd by ourselves. The Snuffers of the Sanctuary were to be of pure Gold: Intimating thereby, that they, whose Business it was to reprove and censure Others, should be themselves of the most refined Morals. What was

i Tim.
iii. 7.

once said of *Cæsar's Wife*, that she must not only be free from any real Crime, but even from the Suspicion of one, should, if possible, be apply'd to every Gospel Minister. He should have a *good Report of them that are without*. That is, without the Pale of the Christian Church. Distinguish yourself therefore from others by those Heroick Virtues which the Generality of Men are Strangers to; let your Conversation shine with so vigorous a Lustre, as to dazzle the Eyes, and stop the Mouths of all Gainfayers. By an undissembled Piety, by an extensive Bounty, by an inoffensive and obliging Carriage, you should commend Religion to the Choice and Approbation of all those with whom you do converse. Gospel Ministers are compar'd to *Stars*, signifying to us by that Metaphor, that their Motions should be regular and constant. Those bright and shining Luminaries perform their appointed Revolutions, without ever deviating from the great Law of their Creation. Remember then, that by Virtue of your Office, you are resembled to a *Star*; not to a wandering *Planet*, whose Motions are sometimes backward and sometimes forward; not to an *Ignis fatuus*, or earthy Exhalation, a vagabond, wandring Light, that misleads unwary Travellers into Bogs of Error and Delusion; not to a *Meteor* or blazing *Comet*, which, after it has been gaz'd upon little while disappears, and fills the Air perhaps with noisome Vapours: But to a fixed *Star* in the Firmament of CHRIST'S Church. Move as vigorously as you please; but let it be in your own Sphere, and with a constant,

stant Regularity. Do nothing that may stain your Character, disgrace your Function, or tempt an unbelieving World to fancy, that all Religion is but a Cheat. Nothing that may grieve the Hearts of the Pious, or open the Mouths of the Profane. You should teach others by your Example, as well as by your Doctrine. Particularly, you should be a Pattern

I. OF Humility. Your Great MASTER was the most illustrious Instance of Humility and Condescension that the World ever saw; and you cannot more effectually recommend yourself to his Esteem and Favour, than by an Imitation of him in this Respect. *Learn of me*, says He, *for I Mat. xi. am meek and lowly.* A meek and quiet Spirit, is an Ornament of great Price in any Person; but it should shine with a peculiar Lustre in such as minister in holy Things. 'Tis a Jewel indeed that does not sparkle in every Bosom; but its Rarity enhances its Value. Look not upon your real, or supposed Excellencies thro' a Magnifying-Glass, that represents them more considerable than in Truth they are. I own indeed, you are oblig'd to *magnify your Office*, and preserve the Honour of your Function. But how must this be done? Not by a stately Gate, an haughty or imperious Carriage, or keeping an affected Distance from your Inferiors. Such a Method, instead of procuring you Respect, will but expose you to Contempt and Hatred. Whilst a modest, condescending Carriage will endear you to Mens Affections, recommend you to their Esteem, and add a Weight to every Thing

Thing you shall offer in your Great MASTER's Name. In his Eye, (who is doubtless the best Judge of Men and Things) you never make a finer Appearance than when you are *clothed with Humility*.

Matta. x.
16.

2. You should be a Pattern of Patience under Injuries and Afflictions. Be you *wise as Serpents. and harmless as Doves*, says our SAVIOUR to his Apostles. A Dove is a very inoffensive Bird; it is not arm'd with a sharp Beak, or greedy Talons; nor is it fed with the Blood and Gore of its Feather'd Companions. On this Account 'tis made the Emblem of a Gospel Minister: Such an one should be injurious to none; but courteous and obliging unto all. An implacable, bitter Temper, is unbecoming a Christian, and much more a Minister. We should leave Vengeance to that God, to whom Vengeance belongs, and not attempt to take the Sword out of his Hand, or to be the Executioners, of his Justice, without his Leave and Permission. We should imitate our Great LORD, *who when he was reviled, reviled not again*. How indeed, can we expect that He should forgive us our Ten thousand Talents, if we take our Fellow-Servant by the Throat for his One hundred Pence?

AND as you should be remarkable for your Patience under Injuries from Men, so also for Patience under the afflicting Hand of GOD. No cross Winds should ever blow you up into a Mutiny against your MAKER. The Burden He lays upon you may wring Tears from your Eyes, but

but it should not be able to extort one peevish or discontented Word out of your Mouth.

3. You should be an Example of living above the World. Your Views and Expectations should be rais'd above this dirty Element on which we tread. You should be able to say to your People in the Language of the great Apostle, *I seek not yours, but you.* Your Office bespeaks you to be a Fisher of Men, and not of Fame or Silver. Nor should St. Peter's Net be exchang'd for Judas's Bag. Your Business is to fill God's House with Converts, and not your own Coffers with uncertain Treasures. Disdain those knavish Tricks, those undermining Arts which some make use of in Order to enrich themselves. Your Aim should be generous and brave, your Views sublime and noble. The Glory of God, and the Good of Souls, should be the Mark at which you aim, all your Studies and Endeavours should have a Subserviency hereunto.

4. You should be an Example of Temperance and strict Sobriety. If you would be *filled with the Spirit*, you must not be *drunk with Wine*, wherein is Excess. It cannot reasonably be supposed, that that Body should be the Temple of the HOLY GHOST, which is made use of only, or principally, as a Tun to contain strong Liquors. The Garments of the Priests, should above all others, be kept unspotted by the Flesh. And those Hands which attend at God's Altar,

Altar, should, as far as is possible, be wash'd in Innocence. Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of that Mouth which preaches the Everlasting Gospel. Those Levities which seem excusable in others, may yet be unbecoming the gravity of your Post and Function. No *double Entendres*, nothing bordering upon Impurity, nothing that is shocking to Modesty and Good-manners, nothing that has a Tendency to kindle a wanton Flame in the Breasts of any, should be ever noted in the Conversation of a Minister.

5. You should be exemplary in your Zeal and Concern for GOD's Glory. 'Tis good to be *zealously affected* whilst in a good Thing. We should contend earnestly, when 'tis for the Faith delivered to the Saints, and not for our own Conceits or Whimsies. You should not stand by as an unconcern'd Spectator, when the Honour of your Great LORD is immediately concern'd. Your Zeal should provoke many, and your Fervency and Ardor in the Cause of JESUS, should stir up others to a noble Emulation of you. They who minister at GOD's Altar, should have their Hearts warm'd by the Fire that is on it. The Zeal of GOD's House should eat you up, as it did the Psalmist; *i. e.* your Time, your Thoughts, your Care. But give me leave to add one Caution, Let it not devour your Charity and good Temper. 'Tis true, your Zeal ought to be qualify'd with Wisdom and Discretion; without this, 'tis

'tis a Wild-fire that sets both Church and State in a Flame : it destroys Charity, consecrates Cruelty, and sets an Edge upon all the savage Passions of the human Nature. Where there is Knowledge without Zeal, the Mind will be becalm'd; and Zeal without Knowledge, is a Tempest and Hurricane that drives and tosses Men against the Rocks, but when there is a happy Concurrence of these two, your Passage to the everlasting Harbour will be both safe and comfortable. Have a Care upon the whole, of carrying more Sail than Ballast, or suffering your Passions and Affections to overtop your Judgment and Understanding.

I hope I need not insist much upon these great social Virtues, Justice and Mercy. Let Conscience rather than Interest be the Rule and Measure of all your Actions. And as for an extensive Bounty, 'twill be expected both by God and Man, that, according to your Ability, you should be *ready to distribute, and willing to communicate*. You should not indeed be influenc'd by a Principle of Ostentation and Vain-glory, as the hypocritical *Pharisees* of old were. However, our Light should *shine before Men*, tho' it be not kindled by a Coal taken from your own Kitchen : And Men should *see your good Works*, that they may be induc'd, not to magnify and applaud you, but to *glorify God*. Tho' you should not sound a Trumpet before you, when you do your Alms ; yet you should *think on, mind, and praise those Things* which are honourable, and

of good Report. Having hinted in what Instances you should look to yourself and your own Conduct.

2. I come to the second Thing included in the Character of an *Overseer*, and that is, to see to your People. And here

Acts
xxvi. 18.

1. You should see that the Ignorant be instructed: The great End and Design of your Office, is, *to open Mens Eyes, and to turn them from Darknes to Light.* This is the End of Catechizing and Preaching. To promote this, your Sermons should be all calculated. As to these, Regard should be had to their Style, Matter, and Manner of their Delivery.

As for the *Style* of your Sermons, this should not be mean, slovenly and grovelling on the one Hand, nor airy and fantastick on the other. That Arrow which flies over the Head will never pierce the Heart: And if your Expressions be unintelligible, you have no Reason to expect they should be ever useful. Great swelling Words, are by the Apostle called Words of *Vanity*; and they well deserve that Character, since they proceed from a vain conceited Mind, and are uttered in vain and to no Purpose. What the Eagle, in the Fable, said of the Nightingale, should not be applied to your Sermons; that they are *Vox & preterea nihil*; A Voice, and nothing else; a fine melodious Sound of Words, without any solid Substance to nourish and refresh the Souls of those that hear you. Your Business is
not

not to tickle Mens itching Ears, but to awake their Consciences, and convince their Judgments. Your Style should be such as becomes the Majesty of that Person you represent, and the Importance of the Truths which you deliver.

As for the *Matter* of your Sermons, I conceive the weighty Matters of the Gospel Repentance towards GOD, and Faith in the Lord JESUS CHRIST, ought principally to be insisted on. Your Business is not to fill Mens Heads with nice and useless Speculations, but to inflame their Hearts with the Love of Piety and Vertue, and to enamour them of those divine and Godlike Graces by which they may resemble the glorious Author of their Beings. Not to make Men subtil Disputants, but exact and holy Walkers. We read of *foolish Questions* that *gender Strife*; and these are better let alone than meddled with. To entertain your Auditory with puzzling and perplexing Controversies, without great Occasion, is the Way to render them censorious and uncharitable, rather than useful and humble. Instead of *Bread*, 'tis to give them *Stones* to throw at one another's Heads. And instead of *Fishes*, 'tis to furnish them with *Serpents*, to hiss, and sting, and spit their Venom in one another's Faces. What little Advantage hath the Protestant Interest gain'd by those eager fierce Disputes which have been set on Foot, concerning the Divine Counsels and Decrees, which some have marshall'd up with as much Exactness as if they had been Privy-Counsellors to the ALMIGHTY.

² Tim.
ii. 23.

Whereas *secret Things* belong to God, and *Things revealed* to us and to our Children. And he, who studies the Decrees, more than the Commands of God, is, by an ingenious Author, very well compar'd to a Man, who walks staring and gazing at the Stars, but takes no Heed to his Steps, and so tumbles over Rocks and Precipices to his no small Hurt and Danger. We should insist upon the great and weighty *Matters of the Law, Faith, Judgment and Mercy*; not on the *Annise, Mint and Cummin*, that grow in our own Gardens. I mean, those Notions and Conceits which are the Product of our own Brain.

As Regard should be had to the Style and Matter of your Sermons; so also to the *Manner of their Delivery*: And this should be with a becoming Energy and Vigour; Not that I would have you clamorous and noisy, as if, like the ancient Heathens, you expected to be heard for your much, or loud Speaking; or as if strong Lungs could give Force and Efficacy to weak Arguments. However, they should be deliver'd with a becoming *Pathos*, and the *lively Oracles* should not be utter'd in a *dead* and unaffecting Manner.

2. You should in the next place see to it, that the Prophane and Vicious be reprov'd: *Titus* was requir'd by St. Paul, to *rebuke sharply*, and *with all Authority*. And *Timothy* was directed to *reprove those that sin before all, that others may fear*. You should be affable and courteous to all, and

Tit. i. 13.
c. ii. 15.

1 Tim.
v. 20.

and yet not carry your Complaisance so far, as to admire Mens Deformities, to compliment their Vices, or flatter their Extravagancies. An Ambassador of the Prince of Peace should not debase his Character so far as to mingle with a dirty Rabble, when following Vice with their *Huzza's* and Acclamations, because perhaps it rides in Triumph, and is cloath'd in Scarlet. Thou shalt in any wise reprove thy Brother, and not suffer Sin to rest upon him. And this was a Duty under the Law, and it is rather more, than less obligatory, under the Gospel. Son of Man, says God, I have made thee a Watchman unto the House of Israel, when I say to the Wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou give him not Warning, that Man shall die in his Iniquity; but his Blood will I require at thy Hand. I own a considerable Measure both of Prudence and Courage is requisite to the Discharge of this Duty. Regard should be had to Time and Season, and to the Quality of the Offender. You may be faithful without being rude or saucy; and discharge your Duty to Mens Souls, without detracting from their Character, or denying them that Respect and Deference that is due to the Post they fill, and the Station they are in. Your Reproof should be managed with so much Tenderness and Pity, that the offending Person may perceive, that it proceeds from the Yearnings of your Bowels, not from the overflowing of your Gall and Spleen. That your Design is to reform, not to disgrace them; to establish their Faith and Virtue, not to undermine

Levit.
xix.. 17.

Ezek.
xiii. 17.

mine their Credit and Reputation. Re-proof is a bitter sort of Pill ; and to make it pass more glibly down, it should be sugar'd over with the sweetest and tenderest Expressions of Compassion. Like an excellent Oyl, it should pierce the Heart, and not break the Head ; convince the Judgment, and yet not irritate the Passions. You should not *daub with untempered Mortar*, (as the Prophet calls it) when Building for Eternity. Nor put soft Pillows under Peoples Elbows, when it will lull them into a mortal Lethargy.

3. SEE to it also, That the Erronious (if possible) be reclaim'd. That such of your Flock as wander and straggle into By-paths, be turn'd into the right Way. I have already given you my Thoughts, that Controversy should not be brought into the Pulpit without great Necessity. But such Necessity there sometimes is. We are call'd upon to *hold fast the Form of sound Words, which is of Faith and Love in CHRIST JESUS*. The Immortality of the Soul, and a future State of Retribution ; the great Mystery of Godliness, GOD, manifested in the Flesh ; the Resurrection of the Body, and the like : These are Truths of Importance, not tamely to be given up. We must not suffer this Treasure to be wrested out of our Hands, if we are able to secure it. *Other Foundation can no Man lay than that which is already laid*. But whilst some build Gold and Silver upon this Foundation, others take as much Pains to heap up Hay, Wood and Stubble. If a Dispute becomes at any Time

2 Tim.
3. 13.

1 Cor.
iii. 11.

Time necessary, it should be manag'd with Decency and Calmness. The Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of God. The *Faith* and *Patience* of the *Saints* are by the Apostle joyn'd together; and 'tis a thousand Pities they should ever part Company. A Man may be engag'd in a good Cause, and yet lose all the Glory and Merit of it by an unchristian Management. When *Michael* disputed with the Devil, he brought not up against him a railing *Accusation*. And should not we rather imitate the Example of an Angel, than lick up the Poison of the Old Serpent? If any Man be fallen (into a Sin or Error) *they that are spiri-* Gal. vi. *tual should restore such an one in the Spirit* 1. *of Meekness*. Soft Words and hard Arguments, are very well consistent with one another. Error may be strangled with a silken Cord as well as one made of rougher and more coarse Materials. Reviling, Censuring, Railing and hard Names, may provoke Mens Passions, but not convince their Judgments. To *in-* *struct* with *Meekness*, is I am sure the most Christian, and I believe you will find it the most successful, Method.

4. SEE that the Doubting be comforted and supported. A faithful Shepherd neglects not the Feeble of his Flock. God, for Reasons infinitely wise, sometimes permits the Children of Light to walk in uncomfortable Darkness. Those Minds which have the Divine Image impress'd upon them, are often full of perplexing Doubts, and unreasonable Fears.

They

They who are very safe, do often fancy themselves in the greatest Danger. Your Business with such, is to resolve their Doubts, to pour Oyl into their Wounds, and use your best Endeavours that their Fears may be dispell'd, and their Hopes reviv'd; that their feeble Hands may be strengthen'd, and their sinking Spirits rais'd; that so they may run and not be weary, and fight and not faint.

5. SEE to those who stand stedfast that they be encourag'd: Excite them to Constancy and Perseverance; and that by your Example as well as Counsel. You can't expect that they should maintain their Posts, if you cowardly desert yours. The Devil knows well enough, if he can but smite the Shepherd, the Sheep will be scatter'd: And so they also will, if he can but intimidate, and make him fly. You are engag'd in a most glorious Cause, a Cause that will be finally successful; and this should animate you against all the Difficulties you may meet with. You fight under his Banner, who is Invincible. And with what Resolution should you engage, when the Conquest is sure, and the Triumph will be glorious?

6. To what has been already said, I beg Leave to mind you of the Regard you ought to have to your Conduct in the Administration of publick Ordinances, a partial Regard to the Man with a *Gold Ring* and in *gay Cloathing*, was severely condemn'd by St. James, and I hope will be never practic'd by you. Do not fawn upon a wicked Man because he is rich,

nor

nor trample on a good Man because he is poor. The Precious indeed should be separated from the Vile; but you are to judge of this, not by the Largeness of their Contributions, but by the Regularity of their Lives.

As to your Publick Devotions, remember that you are the Peoples Mouth to G O D. Your Expressions therefore should be awfull and serious when address'd to the Supreme M A J E S T Y. *Be not rash with thy Mouth, and let not thy Heart Eccl. v. be hasty to utter any Thing before G O D. Of-^{1.}* fer not the Sacrifice of Fools to a B E I N G infinitely wise. You cannot be ignorant how the Dissenters have been misrepresented by some, as if their Prayers were for the most Part made up of Blasphemy, Cant and Nonsense: The greatest Part of those here present, can, I doubt not, attest the Falshood of such an Accusation. However, *fas est & ab Hoste doceri.* We may be instructed by the Calumnies of our Adversaries, as well as the Advices of our Friends. Their Readiness to throw this Dirt upon us, should make us the more cautious and watchful that we give them no just Occasion to bespatter us. Our Prayers indeed should proceed from a broken Heart, but should not themselves be immethodical, broken and confus'd.

III. H A V I N G observ'd to you, That your Character of an Overseer, obliges you to see to yourself, and to your Flock. I beg Leave to add, That it engages you

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to

to look to your Conduct in Respect to your Brethren and Fellow-Ministers. And here,

I. HEARKEN to their Advice. Not that I would have you call any Man *Master*, or run headlong into an Opinion merely because 'tis embrac'd by such or such a great and good Man. We pretend not to any Jurisdiction one over another. However, Multitude of Years should teach Wisdom; and there is some Deference due to the hoary Head.

2. PUT the most favourable Construction on the Words and Actions of your Brethren, that the Nature of the Things will bear. There are some Crimes so heinous, and some Errors so enormous, that for the Honour of our Function, and the Good of Souls, we ought to enter our Protest against them. But as for the common Frailties of our Brethren, both Charity and Prudence will oblige us rather to conceal, than insult and triumph over them. *Elias* was a Man of like Passions with other Mortals. The brightest Lamps in GOD'S Sanctuary have some Snuff in them. The Stars in the Church, like those in the Firmament, have their *Maculae*, their dark Spots, which diminish something of their Lustre. We should be therefore far from exposing the Nakedness of a Father or a Brother to the Eyes of a censorious, malignant World: We should rather hide and conceal those small Indecencies, which the Weakness of their Judgments, or the Violence of their Passions, may betray them to. Above all

all Things, we should abhor the Thoughts of eclipsing another's Fame; that we ourselves may shine with the greater Lustre. Where there is no Fault, do not make one; where there is one, do not magnify it beyond its just Bounds. 'Twas a generous Expression of *Constantine the Great*, That if he saw any Thing indecent by a Christian Bishop, he would cover it with his own Imperial Robe; and he acted suitable hereunto, when in the *Nicene* Synod, he burnt those scurrilous Invectives, without suffering 'em to be read, which some of the more passionate and less judicious Bishops had fram'd in order to bespatter one another.

3. MAINTAIN Peace with them, as far as it is consistent with Truth and Justice. Ministers are, in a peculiar Manner, the *Salt of the Earth*; and those above all others should have *Salt in themselves*, and *Peace one with another*. Should the Ministers of the Gospel pervert the End of their Institution so far, as to beat their Ploughshares into Swords, and their Pruning-Hooks into Spears, they may wound and injure one another; but the Vineyard of our LORD will remain uncultivated, and by Consequence unfruitful. The Feuds and Animosities between the *Eastern* and *Western* Churches, did not a little facilitate the Conquest of the *Saracens* and *Turks*, and the erecting *Mahometan* Mosques upon the Ruins of *Christian* Temples. If we bite and devour one another, this is the ready way to be consumed one of another. Gal v. 15.

THUS have I hinted to you the important Duties of your Function. That

you may be more fully instructed in, and excited to the Performance of them, I would recommend to your Perusal, Mr. Baxter's *Reform'd Pastor*.

BEFORE I conclude, give me Leave to address myself in a few Words to the People here present, who have elected you to minister to them in Holy Things.

I. SET a due Value upon the Mercies and Privilege you enjoy. The Continuance of Faithful Pastors, is promised by GOD as a singular and choice Blessing. Tho' the LORD give you the Bread of Affliction, and the Water of Adversity; yet shall not thy Teachers be removed into Corners any more; but thy Eyes shall behold thy Teachers, and thy Ears shall hear a Voice behind thee, saying, This is the Way, walk in it.

Jer. iii. 15. And again, I will give you Pastors according to my own Heart, who shall feed you with Knowledge and Understanding. On the other Hand, the Removal of such is threatn'd as a most tremendous Judgment. Behold, the Day cometh saith the LORD, that I will send a Famine in the Land, not a Famine of Bread, nor a Thirst for Water, [the Provocations call for a Punishment more terrible, and more severe than this:] But a Famine of bearing the Word of the LORD: 'Twas a Saying of the Constantinopolitans, in Respect to their famous Bishop Chrysostom; "Better that the Sun should be torn from its Orb than John Chrysostom be forc'd out of his Pulpit." This you'll say perhaps, was an Expression of a very high Strain. But I may boldly say, 'Tis better that your Eyes should

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Isa. xxx.
20.

Jer. iii.
15.

Amos
viii. 11.

not in their Holes, than that you should not see the Things that make for your everlasting Peace. Better that the Body should starve for Want of Bread, than the Soul perish for Want of Knowledge. Be thankfull therefore to Almighty God, that you have BIBLES in your Hands, and Ministers in your Pulpits, that the Lines are fallen to you in pleasant Places, and you have had a goodly Heritage.

2. TAKE Reproof kindly, when there is Occasion for it. Don't count him your Enemy, because he tells you the Truth. Do not scratch or bite the friendly Hand that is stretch'd forth in order to pull you as Firebrands out of the Burning, or to hinder you from Stabbing your Consciences, and wounding your own Souls. 'Twas a noble Resolution of the Royal Psalmist, *Let the Righteous smite me, and it shall be a Kindness; Let him reprove me, and it shall be an excellent Oyl, which shall not break my Head.* I shall be so far from resenting it as an Injury, that I shall Esteem it a convincing Instance of real Friendship. Accordingly, when he was rebuk'd, with that Severity which he deserv'd, upon the Account of his scandalous and foul Miscarriage in the Matter of *Urriah*, tho' *Nathan* was his own Subject and Servant, he did not entertain him, as the blustering Hectors of the Age would probably have done, with a Frown or a Kick; and yet *David* was a Man of as much Courage and Valour as any of our modern Heroes can pretend to.

3. P R A Y

Rom. xv. 30. **PRAY** for your Minister. With what Importunity did the Apostle Paul desire the Prayers of his People? Now I beseech you Brethren for the Lord JESUS CHRIST'S Sake, and for the Love of the SPIRIT, that you strive together with me in your Prayers to GOD for me. And if a Person so eminent for Gifts and Graces, needed the Assistance of good People's Prayers, how much more do We, whose Corruptions are stronger, and whose Graces are weaker and more imperfect? Let him therefore who speaks to you in the Name of the LORD be remembered by you, when at the Throne of Grace, and in doing so, you will consult your own Advantage as well as His.

ENCOURAGE Him in his Work and Business, by making his Abode with you as easy and comfortable as you may, by a candid Interpretation of his Words and Actions, and above all Things by your Proficiency in substantial Goodness, and solid Virtue. Give him no just Occasion to complain that he labours in vain, and spends his Strength for nothing.

I might insist more largely on each of these Particulars; but doubt not you will be more fully instructed in these and other Duties, by that worthy Person whom you have chosen to be your Guide in spiritual Concerns. I shall conclude what I have to say with a few good Wishes for you and him.

MAY his Lips preserve Knowledge, and may you enquire the Law at his Mouth. May he be a burning and shining

ing Light, and may you rejoice in his
Light. May he be a tall and flourish-
ing Cedar in God's *Lebanon*, and may
you sit under his Shadow with great De-
light and Satisfaction. May he be a di-
ligent and faithful Labourer in our
LORD's Vineyard, and may you produce
the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness in
your Lives and Conversations. In one
Word, May he be an happy Instrument
in God's Hand, to build you up in Ho-
liness and Comfort through Faith unto
Salvation; and may you be his Joy and
Crown of Rejoycing in the great Day of
our LORD. These, Sirs, are my affecti-
onate Desires and hearty Prayers to
which I doubt not but this numerous
Assembly will say,

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